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FOR NEA/IPA AND NEA/MAG

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TAGS: [KPAL](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#)
SUBJECT: TUNIS-BASED PLO FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER SLAMS
ISRAELI EXCESSIVE FORCE IN GAZA

Classified By: Ambassador William Hudson for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary and Comment: PLO Foreign Affairs Minister Farouk Qaddoumi on July 12 convened representatives of the Americas for a rambling briefing, delivered in English, entitled, "The Latest Developments in Palestine, especially with the Current Israeli Occupation Forces Military Attacks on the Gaza Strip and West Bank." The briefing, littered with historical inaccuracies and colored by his own dubious analysis of geostrategic issues, was largely devoted to a history lesson of the MEPP. Notwithstanding his disclaimer that he did not mean to be "threatening," Qaddoumi was quite harsh in his assessment of the U.S. role in supporting Israel in its excessive use of force in Gaza. Characteristically, Qaddoumi's diatribe was delivered with nods and smiles in the direction of Pol/Econ Counselor. Qaddoumi circulated a press release publicizing a decree signed by PA President Mahmoud Abbas affirming Qaddoumi's role in the conduct of Palestinian foreign affairs. End Summary and Comment.

¶2. (C) The bulk of the 45-minute briefing consisted of a lengthy history lesson of the Arab-Israeli peace process according to Qaddoumi, i.e., not necessarily adhering to historical fact. As he has done in previous such sessions, Qaddoumi's monologue was accompanied by a seemingly random passing around of maps from various stages of the Oslo peace process. He also circulated the 2004 exchange of letters between President Bush and then-Prime Minister Sharon. Scribbled on the top of Bush letter was a note (in Arabic) that appeared to read: "The advice of America to her student, Sharon." There were no questions from the audience.

¶3. (C) Lest his audience be in any doubt about his authority to speak on his chosen subject, Qaddoumi circulated a copy of a July 10, 2006, press release, datelined Ramallah (but printed on the Tunis-based State of Palestine/Palestine Liberation Organization Ministry of Foreign Affairs Political Department letterhead), heralding PA President Mahmoud Abbas, issuance of a decree designating Qaddoumi as the Foreign Affairs Minister of Palestine, and, as such, entitled to speak about the foreign affairs of the Palestinians and representing it (sic) in the international arena. Apparently quoting from the Abbas decree, the press release notes that, "The politburo Tunis-based is the foreign affairs ministry and the chief of the politburo is responsible for Palestine's political profile."

¶4. (C) Among the points Qaddoumi made:

-- "Mr. Olmert is destroying everything in the Gaza Strip, using all of his force, not only killing "freedom fighters," but bombarding houses, killing women and children. 16,000 houses have been completely destroyed in the Gaza Strip and West Bank."

-- "All this for one prisoner captured by Palestinians? One armed soldier? We have 9,000 POWs in Israel. He is a soldier. We have a right to kill him because he is occupying our country."

-- "Don,t worry about Hamas. Hamas is not accepted in this part of the world. Our people are frustrated because there is no peace. That is the reason for Hamas." (Note: This message is at odds with more pro-Hamas Qaddoumi posturing observed by another Embassy officer.)

-- "The PLO recognized Israel. Rabin recognized the PLO... Article 6 of the Oslo Agreement says that the PLO should negotiate with Israel and sign agreements on behalf of national aQorities. So why are you asking the national authority to recognize Israel?"

-- "I,m not threatening; just reading the future. Israel is a tiny state. How will it continue to live when it is on bad terms with the Arabs? The world has changed. There is more than one superpower. More countries own atomic bombs, including Arabs." (Note: It was not clear which Arab countries Qaddoumi was referring to. He also went on to condemn the U.S. for invading Iraq on the pretext of WMD's when Iraq had no such weapons.)

-- "We don,t hate the U.S., but they provide arms and money to Israel. The U.S. must put pressure on Israel to move out.... It is the responsibility of the U.S. because the whole thing is in a stalemate. Those who claim to be the protectors of peace and security in the world must take action. It is time to do something before it is too late. Our people have to see that the international community and the superpowers do something."

HUDSON